

Can Divorced and Separated Catholics be Happy?
What is Happiness?

February 1983

I. First discuss some insights and disagreements which traditional philosophers had about the nature of happiness.

II. Then apply some of these views to the specific situation of divorced and separated Catholics.

A.

I. Aristotle
~~XX.~~ (384-322)

Happiness an activity in accordance with virtue
over a complete life
it demands a certain affluence,
good health, and good friends (marriage)

~~XX.~~

B. Boethius
(480-524)

happiness does not come from outside the person, but from within
as a Christian he ultimately concluded that happiness comes from union with God

C. Viktor Frankl

Happiness is the after effect of having found a meaning in life.

Experiencing a value - love
accomplishing a task - work
bearing suffering with dignity - transcendence

D. Tolstoy . St. Francis, St. Terese , Marguerite D'Youville

Happiness involves toil, and follows from the free offering of life's goods, in union with Christ.

Here, not just bear with outside calamities, but go further and invite them out of union with others who do not have them. Identification with the poor in the world.

Marguerite D'Youville, an example closer to home.
husband a gambler and alcoholic
only two of six children survived
turned her grief inside out and dedicated

herself to the care of the poor...the elderly, handicapped, orphans, and prostitutes.

During the War took in soldiers from all sides of the battles....

II. Application to specific situation of divorced and separated Catholics.

the existential situation

a. I am one of you. Eleven years ago my marriage broke up and I was left with two sons ~~at~~ age 3 and 5, no financial support, and a decision to make.

1. what did it mean to me to be a Catholic who had promised to be faithful, for better ~~and~~ or worse, until death ?

a. this was certainly the worse...

x~~xx~~

b. a cross roads in my faith, ~~x~~especially

b. the psychological dynamics

1. the phases of grief ~~A~~ - Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in On Death and Dying

a. shock - loss of weight, lack of sleep, numness and disbelief

b. anger - at the other person, at the Church, at God, at the self.

c. depression- 3 months to 3 years. a feeling of listlessness, perhaps covered up by hyperactivity in work, or promiscuity in sexual relations, or else by withdrawal, isolation, and general gloominess.

d. then , finally, a new beginning...marked by pleasure in picking up old hobbies which had given pleasure before the breakup-- music, skiing, etc, by the beginning of new interests, perhaps a desire for a new job , change of place of living, or falling in love.

2. all of these psychological dynamics occur in one way or another to every person who has experienced a death

c. happiness can only begin to resurface at the end of the grieving process

1. if Catholic and divorced or separated, how is it possible to be happy?

2. there are several different kinds of circumstances

and several factors:

- a. general factors: loneliness and loss of companionship...revaluation of relationships
 1. need to develop and deepen friendships with members of both sexes.

sexual deprivation: a kind of withdrawal situation...comparable to giving up smoking.

very hard at first, easier after a while
a revaluation of chastity ...of sexuality

revaluation of the meaning and place of Catholicism and Christ in one's life.

- b. this leads to the second set of specific factors:

1. a question about the validity of the marriage.
 - a. a period of about 3 years for the tribunal to come to a decision.

- b. if invalid, then one set of options... remarriage, or a religious vocation... a vow is still possible.

- c. if valid, then another set of options.
 1. the silent witness of waiting for reconciliation....

2. the selection of another marriage partner...which contravenes the Chruch's teachings about the sacredness and inviolability of the first marriage...the loss of access to the sacraments...or participation in defiance of the Chruch's teachings....

3. the decision of alliances which are not leading to a marriage...in defiance of the church's teachings about fornication and adultery...

- d. another to kiss the leper...accept being a single person in the world...old maid

2. happiness, if it ensues in peoples lives will do so if some kind of integration and union with Christ begins to permeate these important decisions....

- a. the period of intense internal conflict cannot itself produce happiness...always divided against the self, or against the teachings of the Church.

- b. therefore, must try to find a way to knit this integration, in the spedific set of circumstancesif succeed, in union with Christ, then happiness will follow.

- c. it can not be sought, but will be found.

2^o the selection of another
church which allows remarriage
of Christians -

c. the specific teachings of Christ offer a clue
here of the ~~sp~~ path....

" Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted" (Mat. 5:5

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.

" Come to me, all you who labor and are
overburdened, and I will give you rest.
Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I
am gentle and humble in heart, and you
shall find rest for your souls. Yes, my
yoke is easy and my burdan light."

~~xxxxxxthe person whom~~

d. it may be that Christ offers us a sure path to
rest in the soul and happiness.

Take a single night or day when you are filled
with yearning for companionship, love, or
sexual fulfillment and offer the sacrifice of
that night or day for another person or couple
who might be estranged, lonely, or sexually
frigid or impotent.

There are so many broken hearts in the world,
people who are not attractive, people who no
one wants, or people who are blocked in their
desires for a complete love relationship in
marriage.

" We never know whether such a sacrifice changes
the course of the world, but we can know the
extraordinary feeling of peace and the presence of
Christ which follows such a free gift. ~~We~~ None
of us chose to be divorced or separated Catholics,
but all of us can grow in our capacities to be
conformed more and more to the image of Christ
by accepting this path on which we have been called,
and answering " Yes. I will follow you wherever
you ask me to go. For You are the way, the truth,
and the life." As Peter so perfectly understood
when Christ asked him if he too would abandon him:

" Lord who shall we go to? You have the message of
eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are
the Holy One of God."